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ABSTRACT

After identifying the aspects of classroom life that school restructuring might influence, this paper summarizes findings on school principals' perceptions concerning the potential effects of fundamental school reform. Because so little is known about principals' views on restructuring, an exploratory study employing qualitative methodology (indepth interviewing of a small sample) was used. Participants included 15 principals (2 women and 13 men) from public schools in New York, Illinois, and Tennessee. Findings were organized around the major areas of inquiry: conceptions of restructuring; potential impact of restructuring; prerequisites for successful implementation; and changes at the classroom and school levels. Generally, observed differences in principals' responses did not conform to patterns related to schooling level, geographic location, district context, or years of administrative experience. Principals felt that restructuring would have its greatest impact on the teacher's role. For themselves, principals forecast fewer decisions to be made by themselves, leading to a loss of power. Most principals felt that students would remain largely untouched by restructuring efforts. Principals' perspectives on radical change, restructuring goals, performance accountability, and curriculum and instruction are also discussed. Although the principals as a group were fairly supportive of restructuring, their beliefs emphasize the myriad difficulties associated with fundamental reform and its implementation. (34 references) (MLH)

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Restructuring Schools:

Principals' Perceptions of Fundamental Educational Reform

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The period of time between 1980 and 1992 has been one of great tumult in education in the United States and throughout much of the rest of the world as well. Beginning in the late 1970s, a groundswell of disenchantment with the American educational system began. Shaped by forces largely outside the control of educators--the perceived slippage of the American economy in the world order, the changing fabric of society that began to present schools with a host of seemingly intractable dilemmas, and the friction caused by the movement to a post-industrial society--this disenchantment crystallized in a series of national and state reform reports, beginning with the National Commission of Excellence in Education's 1983 report entitled A Nation at Risk.

Since that time, widespread efforts have been undertaken to improve schooling (Elmore, 1990a; Murphy, 1990). Early reform initiatives focused almost exclusively on repairing perceived deficiencies in the educational system, e.g. tightening educational standards, requiring educators to work harder, and developing more effective methods to hold schools accountable for their outcomes. This approach to change rested upon the beliefs that the enterprise of public education had become lax and that confidence in the system could be restored by strengthening controls and prescribing the correct course of action.

Other critics using different frames of reference mounted a stringent attack on these early reform measures as well as on the assumptions and methods of action embedded in them (Chubb, 1988; Cuban, 1984, 1990; Fullan, Bennett, & Rolheiser-Bennett, 1989; Sedlack, Wheeler, Pullin, & Cusick, 1986). These reformers called not for repair of the current system but for a major overhaul of the entire educational enterprise. They argued that education's problems were attributable less to the shortcomings of the men and women who worked in schools than they were to serious flaws in the system of schooling itself, to

the ways that schools are organized, governed, and managed. In their efforts to improve schooling, they turned away from prescriptions and control mechanisms and toward strategies that empower school professionals and parents to determine the needs of schools as well as the programs and mode of organization best designed to meet those needs. These reformers focused on initiatives to dramatically revise the infrastructure of education with the goal of altering the dynamics among all the actors involved in the schooling process.

This second view of educational reform--commonly labeled restructuring--was captured most prominently in two reports published in 1986--A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the Twenty-First Century (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy) and Tomorrow's Teachers (Holmes Group). The ideas embedded in these and later reports have begun to exert considerable influence over efforts to improve schooling in the United States (Murphy, in press). While difficult to capture to everyone's satisfaction, restructuring is not quite so amorphous a construct as critics sometime argue. Basically, restructuring includes endeavors to:

(1) decentralize--both administratively and politically--the organization, management, and governance of schooling;

(2) empower those closest to students in the classroom, i.e., teachers, the principal, and parents;

(3) create new roles and responsibilities for all the players in the system;

(4) transform the teaching-learning process that unfolds in classrooms.

In earlier work, we identified a variety of sources from which a picture of restructuring can be developed (Murphy, in press). In this article, we focus on the method of understanding restructuring that has received perhaps the least amount of attention in the literature -- the perceptions of professionals who work in schools. Elsewhere we have

presented information on teachers' views of restructuring (Murphy, Evertson, & Radnofsky, in press). Here we provide a portrait of principals' perceptions. As in our earlier report, and consistent with the larger goal of this National Center for Educational Leadership project, we were interested in investigating the effects of fundamental reform on teaching and learning -- the dimension of restructuring that, in our view, needs to be at the heart of efforts to transform schooling.

Therefore, in this study we began by identifying aspects of classroom life that restructuring might conceivably influence. We then sought the perceptions of school principals concerning the potential impact of fundamental school reform on these elements of classroom life. Principals comprise an important role group in restructuring efforts given their considerable control over the implementation of school-level innovations (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; Fullan et al., 1989). Given the beliefs of these principals will restructuring reforms lead to fundamental changes or is it likely that restructuring will stop at the classroom door, leaving the teaching-learning process largely unaltered?

Research Design

Because so little is known about principals' views on restructuring, we decided that an exploratory study employing qualitative methodology would be most appropriate. In a similar vein, because our goal was to portray principals' voices, we used in-depth interviewing. Finally, because our objective was to probe deeply into principals' perspectives and to develop rich descriptions of their views on restructuring, we chose a small sample with whom we could work more intensively. We readily acknowledge the limitations that accompany the choices made in the methods of conducting the study--particularly those that accompany the small sample size--and present our results within the

context of these limitations.

Sample

Fifteen principals--two women and thirteen men from public schools in New York, Illinois, and Tennessee participated in the study. Six were elementary school principals, four were administrators at the junior high or middle school level, and five others were high school principals. Participates ranged in age from 34 to 58 and in experience as principals from 3 to 23 years.

Since one of our goals was to elicit divergent perspectives on restructuring, we conducted interviews with principals from northern and mid-western industrialized states as well as from a rural southern state. We also selected principals who were beginning restructuring efforts in their districts as well as principals who were still grappling with initiatives from the earlier wave of educational reform. Our sample included principals from urban, suburban, and rural schools.

Instrument

A semi-structured interview protocol was originally developed to assess teachers' perceptions of restructuring (Murphy et al., in press). That instrument underwent minor changes and was used in this study to assess principals' views of restructuring. The instrument consisted of twenty-two open-ended questions drawn from our review of the restructuring literature (Murphy, in press).

The principals were first asked to respond to a series of open-ended, non-cued questions regarding their general feelings about restructuring, their beliefs about whom they thought might be affected, and their thoughts about the changes that would have to take place in their specific schools in order for restructuring to occur. We then moved to more specific topics and sought principals' views about areas of potential change at both the

classroom and the school levels. These included:

- the teaching-learning process in general,
- teachers' relationships with students,
- school learning climate,
- budget development and allocations,
- curriculum,
- professional development,
- student schedules,
- expenditures of time by teachers and other school professionals,
- specific teaching practices,
- organization of students for learning,
- management of student behavior,
- outcomes for students,
- students' interactions with other students, and
- students' interactions with teachers.

Finally, we provided two role-playing scenarios in which the principal, as a member of the school-based decision-making group, was charged with developing strategies to establish a learning orientation in the school, to encourage student responsibility for learning, and to improve student learning outcomes.

The framework of the interview protocol was meant to guide principals to analyze restructuring first in the most general terms--to collect their thoughts on who would be affected, what broad changes would occur, what general school changes and classroom changes they would expect--and then to focus on specific changes at the school and classroom levels. Redundancy was a deliberate feature of the interview protocol. We asked

questions that involved the same persons in different contexts. We also addressed similar issues at multiple levels (school, classroom, small group) to learn how principals view restructuring at different organizational levels.

Data Collection and Analysis

The interviews took place at the principals' schools. Three pilot interviews were conducted to familiarize the investigators with the instrument. Each of the fifteen interviews reported here lasted between one and two hours. Audio recordings were made of the interviews. These were transcribed and then checked against the taped interviews. Transcriptions were analyzed qualitatively following procedures outlined by Miles and Huberman (1984). Coding and analytic induction were employed to develop the themes presented in the remainder of this report.

Results

In this section of the paper, we report the results of the investigation. The findings are organized around the major areas of inquiry: conceptions of restructuring, potential impact of restructuring, prerequisites for successful implementation, changes at the classroom and school levels. In general, observed differences in the responses of principals did not conform to patterns related to level of schooling, geographic location, district context, or years of administrative experience. Obvious limitations of our sample might account for the limited variance in perceptions. Where such differences were evident, we note them.

Conceptions of Restructuring

In this portion of the interview, the questions were structured with as few cues as possible. Our intent was to elicit administrators' perceptions of restructuring unbiased by our views. We attempted to discover how they conceived of restructuring, what impact it might have and on whom, and what conditions they believed were prerequisites for

successful restructuring. When asked for their thoughts on the general idea of restructuring schools, eleven of the fifteen principals quickly responded that it was a good or outstanding idea. They envisioned shared decision-making leading to increased teacher ownership and school improvement. They perceived ownership as providing the impetus for increased teacher and parental motivation and initiative, while shared decision-making was seen as a means to more effective problem solving.

Despite their initial positive responses, these principals also cited severe reservations, especially regarding the roles of teachers and parents. All of the principals noted that some portion of the faculty would have to allocate time for decision-making committees. Several voiced a concern that this would reduce the classroom effectiveness of those teachers. Furthermore, four of the eleven principals who believed in the merits of restructuring and two administrators who were less supportive argued that teachers do not want the responsibility of decision-making. In their view, a relatively small percentage wanted the type of extensive involvement in decision-making envisioned by reformers. They contended that even fewer teachers would be interested once the time commitment became more explicit and real.

In a somewhat different vein, they raised doubts regarding the appropriateness of significant parental involvement in schooling. The principals noted that it would be difficult for parents to be aware of the latest trends in education; this perspective was captured in the folk wisdom of administrators who say "people are not experts on schools simply because they attended one." Additional concerns included: a lack of parental time to invest because of the increasing number of families in which both parents work and the greater number of single-parent families; parent apathy; lack of parental representation of the entire community; the possibility of power struggles, particularly between teachers and

parents; and problems caused by parents with "an axe to grind." Interestingly, teachers also report skepticism about the desirability of expanded parental involvement (Hallinger & Yanofsky, 1990; Murphy et al., in press).

Two administrators viewed the idea of restructuring as a good one but with caveats. One opposed the imposition of restructuring in cases where the school is already doing well. He saw no need to implement an all-purpose solution where there was no perceived problem. In contrast, the second principal supported restructuring simply because she believes that change is always accompanied by positive aspects. This individual did note, however, that decision-making is slowed down as more people become involved. She viewed this as a definite disadvantage. Interestingly, this principal claimed to be working in a school that had already begun efforts to restructure.

The two principals who clearly opposed the concept of restructuring supported their positions with different reasons. The first saw the necessity of having an individual who had the final authority to make decisions and was, therefore, ultimately accountable to the superintendent and board of education. Congruently, the majority of the principals mentioned that if parents and teachers are given the authority to make decisions, they must be held accountable for the results. One respondent expressed the general sentiment by stating, "The old theory of if something goes wrong, hang the coach, should not apply." This view is consistent with previous commentary reporting administrators' concerns with accountability in a shared decision-making process (Geisert,1988; Seeley, Niemeyer & Greenspan, 1990).

The second principal opposed to restructuring believed it would lead to increased stress on administrators, erode administrative power, and put the building administration at "odds somewhat with the central office which pays lip service to restructuring but

doesn't really let go of some of that central authority." Two principals claiming to support restructuring favored shared decision-making but not with equal authority among participants.

Potential Impact of Restructuring

The primary impetus behind school restructuring has been the need to improve teaching and learning in schools. We were, therefore, interested in discovering the potential impact of school restructuring as viewed by principals. Would restructuring, as they conceived of it, most affect parents, teachers, or students? Would its impact be felt most strongly in school governance, teaching and learning, teacher morale, parental satisfaction, or some other area of school functioning?

The consensus among the principals was that school restructuring would have its greatest impact on the role of teachers. Despite their skepticism over the extent to which teachers really want increased responsibility for decision-making, they did express the belief that a restructured decision-making process would require increased involvement of teachers. The principals projected that enhanced ownership and responsibility for decision-making could lead to increased teacher self-esteem, motivation, and participation, and therefore, to a more rapid response in meeting students' needs.

In research concerning teachers' perceptions of restructuring, several teachers sensed that they would feel an increase in pressure in a restructuring environment (Murphy et al., in press). The principals' views were largely congruent with this belief. First, they foresaw an increase in pressure on teachers "to perform or get out" of restructured schools. One principal was adamant about the need to eliminate tenure.

Most of the administrators also commented on the unanticipated impact of the pressures that accompany involvement in decision-making. One principal summarized

this perspective remarking, "The people who now feel that that's what they want [shared decision-making] don't have to deal with the political pressures, the board pressures, the central office pressures, etc..." Finally, congruent with a perceived increase in pressure on teachers from accountability demands and a deeper involvement in educational politics, several administrators predicted that as teachers played a larger role in the decision-making process, they would become more independent thinkers and struggle to break away from union control -- a fact which they believed would further increase pressure on the teaching corp.

Principals viewed the effects of restructuring on themselves almost exclusively in terms of power. They forecast new roles with fewer decisions to make by themselves leading to a loss of control and power. In response to how administrators will be affected by this loss of power, one principal bluntly stated, "I think the administrator, if he has any insight into anything, could see the handwriting on the wall. He has two choices, change or get out." A reluctance to change exhibited by administrators and teachers from the "old school" has been a common concern voiced by principals (Hallinger &Yanofsky, 1990).

Among positive changes for administrators, most of the principals believed that the schools would benefit from increased building autonomy. Several asserted the belief that they would become better decision-makers as additional perspectives were brought into the decision-making process. Some also thought that with the increased delegation of their responsibilities, they would have more time to devote to assisting in teacher development.

Despite their misgivings concerning parental involvement, thirteen of the principals believed that the role of parents would be altered by restructuring. Parents would gain greater voice in the decision-making process. Consequently, they would be more informed and possibly more tolerant after understanding the problems educators face. Most

significantly, principals noted the possibility of parents forging more robust partnerships with schools in the education of their children. Parents would be more knowledgable about and more actively involved in the school's educational program.

Seven principals mentioned students as likely beneficiaries of restructured schools; of the seven, only two anticipated enhanced student performance. The other five principals failed to mention specific ways in which students might be touched by restructuring efforts. They believed that student ownership and input would be advantageous to the educational process, but spoke rather vaguely of students "reaping the benefits of all this [restructuring]."

Of the remaining eight principals, one respondent specifically indicated the conviction that students would not be touched by this set of reforms. "I don't know what else can be done other than to form committees to discuss maybe enhancing slightly what we are already doing."

Prerequisites for Successful Implementation

There was considerable agreement on the nature of the changes needed to make restructuring work. The responses can be categorized as: 1) a widely-held, clear understanding of restructuring, 2) human relations skills, 3) training, 4) financial support, and 5) political acumen. Communication of what restructuring entails, clear role definitions, collaboration between all groups involved, conflict resolution skills, support, commitment, and trust were cited as foundations for successful human interactions in restructuring efforts. Intense training in shared decision-making and effective schools research and practice was seen as essential to prepare parents, teachers, principals, central office administrators, and school board members for restructuring. Broad-based financial support, as well as the need for a contingency budget to be prepared for unanticipated

problems, were also listed. Finally, to reduce the political obstacles to restructuring, better public relations, union support, shifts in administrative power, and decision-making based upon global needs, as opposed to self-interests, were deemed criteria fundamental to successful restructuring.

Changes at the Classroom and School Levels

After hearing the principals' general perceptions of restructuring, we encouraged them to project themselves into a restructured school where shared decision-making had been implemente--where the staff at the school had been given considerable autonomy over such areas as budget, curriculum, scheduling, and professional development. We asked them how conditions, processes, and activities might change at both the school and classroom levels given this type of restructured environment. At this point, the probes were still very general, e.g., "Given SBM and shared decision-making, what changes would you envision in the area of curriculum?" We group the themes culled from the responses into six sections--curriculum, supporting structure, teacher roles and workplace, school climate, organizing for learning and managing classroom behavior, and student outcomes--for discussion below.

Curriculum. There was little consensus among the principals regarding potential ways in which the curriculum might be altered in a restructured school. The most common theme, the call for a more integrated curriculum delivered more cooperatively by the teachers, was voiced by five principals. Surprisingly, however, only three principals mentioned that teachers should write the curriculum, and all three warned that extensive training and a great deal of time would be required in order for teachers to be successful in this endeavor. Despite being asked to project themselves into a restructured school with the ability to develop their own curriculum, three principals were incapable of envisioning

a change from a deeply entrenched state mandated curriculum. One principal stated, "The method of instruction may change, but the curriculum will not. The curriculum has been so clearly defined by the state, and we have to live within those boundaries." A second principal, opposed to a teacher-developed curriculum, noted: "I do not find my staff to be knowledgeable at all about curriculum innovation or in terms of current research." This finding is at odds with research on teachers' views of restructuring in which teachers envision a greater role for themselves in developing curricula, with decreased state and district responsibility, leading to improved student outcomes (Murphy et al., in press).

A second theme was the desire for a more flexible curriculum, one which lends itself to a variety of instructional strategies. The principals believed that the curriculum should offer teachers greater latitude, in addition to providing students with a wider range of choices. In spite of their approval of a more student-centered curriculum, only two respondents noted the importance of a character development and self-esteem component. Furthermore, no principals mentioned student input into the curriculum, while only one foresaw parental involvement. Remaining curricular suggestions included ongoing assessment of the curriculum, a larger support budget, greater emphasis on technology, and making it more challenging, as opposed "to reaching the maximum number of students at the minimum level."

Supporting structure. Many assumptions are embedded in the arguments of reformers with respect to restructuring schools. Specifically, advocates of restructuring assume that increased teachers' voice in decision-making in combination with the devolution of authority for decision-making from the central office to schools will result in different (and better decisions) about a variety of important organizational arrangements (David, 1990). Reformers contend that, in theory, restructuring will lead to increased

diversity in the patterns of school organization and ways of delivering educational programs (Elmore, 1990b; Murphy, in press).

Thus, we sought to understand the nature of these anticipated changes from the perspective of the principals. More specifically, we asked the principals to identify the nature of budgetary, scheduling, and staff development changes they would envision for their restructured schools. How might their schools alter these structures that have been the target of reformers criticisms?

Five themes are evident in their responses to how budgeting might differ in a restructured school. First, although two principals claimed to already have considerable autonomy over the school's budget, the remainder of the principals foresaw a more flexible, decentralized budget. The staff could decide to "put money where the need was, rather than having it uniformly allocated" among teachers or across budget categories.

Second, ten principals reported that in their restructured schools a much larger percentage of the budget would be allocated to personnel, allowing the school to decrease class sizes, reduce teacher workload, hire additional specialists and support staff, and implement new programs such as Quest and Whole Language. It was not made clear just where the money would come from for the additional personnel since this category already dominates school budgets. Only one individual identified a potentially serious budgeting problem. This principal simply asked, "How are we going to pay for this?" It is possible that the principals' inattention to costs stemmed from our instructions to make up their own assumptions about the nature of restructuring. We have, however, noted elsewhere a tendency in the reform literature to overlook the real and opportunity costs of reform (Murphy, 1990, in press).

Third, the principals favored teacher authority to order the materials necessary to

deliver the instructional program. They envisioned cooperative teacher purchases leading to increased use of materials and a greater sharing of supplies. They also saw the possibility of greater flexibility in the purchasing of supplies if freed from certain constraints imposed by the central office.

Fourth, the principals supported higher teacher salaries and teacher compensation for helping with extracurricular activities. Finally, in their restructured schools the principals maintained that more funds should be allocated to teacher training and development. As one principal put it, "...there needs to be a lot more money focused on training teachers and spending the time to treat teachers like professionals."

In terms of scheduling, there was a consensus that the traditional school year needs to be reconfigured by implementing shorter, staggered breaks in place of one extended summer vacation. However, there were two distinct opinions regarding the length of the school day. While seven principals reported that the school day should be lengthened, three others believed that it is unrealistic to consider alteration of the school day given the impact on families, school budgets, and the transportation system. One respondent expressed this sentiment by stating, "I think we still have to live within the fact that we have got households at work. Kids have to be home at a certain time, so you are kind of limited to the gross five and a half or six hours that you are going to be able to work with kids." When asked about schedule changes, another principal reaffirmed the intensity of state influence by responding, "In my own mind, I can't go so far as to say well we're not going to worry about state mandates."

At the classroom level, principals believed that restructured schools could provide greater flexibility in scheduling. Teams of teachers could arrange for a greater variety of instructional groupings. In addition, they would be better able to adapt the length of classes

to the needs of students and the curriculum, rather than the other way around. Other common threads intertwined in the principals' responses included scheduling additional and more flexible time for teacher planning, rotating teacher specialists to solve the problem of pulling students out of regular classes too often, and scheduling an advisory period to enable students and teachers to develop more positive relationships. Additional scheduling change suggestions included cross-grade level lunches, more extra- and co-curricular activities, less core coursework, an early morning program, eliminating recess, and beginning school at different times of the day in consideration of students' and teachers' biological clocks.

Staff development represented another important component of the school's supporting structure. The administrators identified two roles for staff development in a restructured school. They mentioned the importance of training everyone involved in the restructuring process so they could assume new roles and responsibilities. They further believed that training would be essential to help staff, parents, students, and administrators understand what restructuring involves and learn how to participate effectively in an environment characterized by shared decision-making and collaborative work relationships.

The principals were also adamant about the need for restructured schools to develop ongoing professional development plans tailored to the school's vision and supported by the budget. They emphasized the value of and the need for staff development to enhance teacher performance. They envisioned inservice activities that focused on instructional strategies, subject matter content, and peer coaching. Staff would be more involved in the selection and delivery of professional development activities. They foresaw increased collegial pressure to attend seminars, and an obligation to share information upon

returning from workshops.

Principals also voiced several concerns in the area of professional development. They noted a reluctance on the part of many teachers to take time off to particpate in professional growth activities. They also pointed out that most staff development programs were not continuous in nature. One principal asserted:

> I don't think any teachers on my staff would submit themselves to the care of a physician who hadn't read a journal, taken a course, or been to a seminar in twenty years. I think if you are going to restructure schools and you are going to keep pace with the mass of changes going on in society, you had better be part of a program of ongoing professional development that starts the day you graduate college and receive your teaching certificate and ends the day you put in your retirement papers.

The principals expressed one other concern. They questioned the community's commitment to support a sufficient allocation of the budget to staff development. One principal commented: "they [the community] don't recognize that the teachers are like diamonds; the more facets they have, the more valuable they are."

Teacher roles and workplace. We noted earlier that principals envisioned restructured schools having the greatest impact on the role of teachers. They identified five distinct ways in which restructuring efforts might affect the teaching-learning process. Foremost, they believed that restructuring would result in more individualized instructional programs that would "focus on individual needs" and "consider different learning styles." In addition, they foresaw an interdisciplinary curriculum that fostered more collaborative activity among teachers. They hoped for "less paper and pencil kinds

of tasks," and more hands-on lessons which would enable students to become more actively involved. They called for a greater diversity of student-centered instructional strategies such as cooperative learning. As one principal stated, in a restructured school the teacher will be "more of a facilitator... less a feeder of information." Finally, the principals thought that restructuring could open up opportunities for expanding education beyond the classroom walls. They believed that restructured schools would help teachers "explore experiential and out of school opportunities and connect with those people in the community" who can make them possible.

One administrator was highly critical of the way teachers teach and did not believe that restructuring would lead to improvement in this area. This respondent exclaimed, "I think that the way teachers teach is most effective when driven from the top down. My experience has been that when teachers have had a lot of responsibility to make decisions about the way they teach, there has been very little student growth. I think in many cases, quite frankly, there was a lot of loss in fact." This school head identified the biggest problem with the teaching profession as "teachers who have lost the desire to teach or who are unwilling to cooperate." He did not foresee restructuring having a positive impact on this problem.

The principals predicted that restructuring would significantly influence teachers' allocation of time. As noted earlier, many of the principals thought that teachers would end up spending considerably more time on committees; several feared that this would have a negative impact on students' learning. One school leader noted, "The more you pull a teacher out of the classroom, the less the students get. I would assume that these meetings either have to be after school or at night so parents can also work on the committees."

Regardless of their position on how much teacher time should be allocated to committees, all of the principals assumed that teachers would have more time available to them in restructured schools. They believed that this additional time would be gained through the employment of paraprofessionals to handle a variety of non-teaching duties (e.g., monitoring the cafeteria and parking lot, providing clerical assistance so teachers have "less bureaucracy, less paper work, less crap" to deal with) and through more efficient and flexible scheduling. Principals foresaw teachers devoting this additional time to classroom planning, curriculum improvement, peer observation, professional development, and to more frequent collegial sharing and support. They saw a direct connection between this additional time for professional activities and teachers' attitudes towards their work. In general, the principals envisioned the possibility of better teacher attendance, more willingness to help students before and after normal school hours, and "less time spent complaining."

School climate. If restructuring were to be successfully implemented, these principals maintained that the climate of their organizations would be more caring and this would be evident among all stakeholders in the school. They held that all groups would feel ownership and learn to respect the opinions of others, features missing all too often from many schools.

They believed the climate in a restructured school would be warm, focused, energetic, relaxed, happy, and active. Moreover, it would be characterized by an increase in school spirit and participation, a strong work ethic, trust, mutual respect, and a "shared commitment to kids." One principal summarized the type of atmosphere projected by the principals: "The kids would see that the teachers were happy coming here. The kids would be happy coming here. It would be more interesting and fun."

This reinforced the importance of teacher and student self-esteem and underscored the belief expressed by several principals that there is a positive correlation between a healthy school climate and student achievement.

The importance of a safe, orderly environment was also mentioned by several administrators. In response to people who say, "It's ludicrous that we want kids to come to school, but we punish them by not letting them be in school," one individual argued for "more control to say we're not going to have that [drug dealing] in this school, and you're going to have to be here under those conditions." On the contrary, a second principal wished for a less custodial environment, as opposed to our current philosophy of, "We are here to keep kids in, keep intruders out, and to make sure that things don't get out of control." In part, these divergent views reflected differences in the nature of the school and community context in which the principals worked.

Although the majority of the respondents believed restructuring would lead to more positive school climates, two principals predicted only minor changes. One individual responded, "When you are working with primaries, you have got to be pretty upbeat. You don't get a lot of the negativism that you sometimes get with older age children, so I don't see a great deal of difference occurring." The other advised, "Where it works [climate], I don't want it to be changed."

All but one principal believed that restructuring would result in more healthy, positive interactions among students and teachers. They envisioned teachers and students viewing the learning process as a partnership or shared exploration. The development of a facilitating mindset in teachers in restructured schools was expected to lead to increased student participation and questioning.

School heads also hypothesized that smaller class sizes, a more fully utilized school

day, and advisory programs would result in more genuinely personal student-teacher relationships. The teachers would serve as advisors and as role models for the students, and there would be mutual respect for each others' feelings. One principal summarized this sentiment remarking, "I think that the relationship between the teacher and student has to be respected, a greater mutual respect for each other. I don't think we demand respect from kids anymore, we earn it."

In terms of students interactions with other students, the principals hoped that restructuring would foster an environment in which students would help one another. They believed that cooperative learning and curricular programs such as Quest would lead to greater interdependence, more openness, better coping skills, and more positive interactions among students. One principal stated, "I think tolerance and respect for cultures and ethnic groups would increase."

Although several respondents seemed to view restructuring as an effective strategy to reduce elitism, cliques, and peer pressure, one commented, "I think adolescence by its very nature is a time of conflict. I don't think that will change because I think that it is a process kids have to go through. I think that within a restructured school, you have to set up an avenue for them to deal with that." There were mixed opinions on the degree to which restructuring schools would assist in opening such avenues.

Organizing for learning and managing classroom behavior. There was very little agreement on how to best group students for maximum learning. In fact, for every principal who provided a suggestion on grouping, a colleague expressed an opposing viewpoint. For example, while some principals favored grouping students within interdisciplinary teaching teams, one principal questioned the reality of integrating subjects-- "To really put 3 or 4 disciplines together, we have a hell of a time because it

involves too many different teachers teaching too many different things."

Again, while one principal favored grouping based on interests only, another remarked, "Interests of young children change so quickly and so drastically" that grouping on interests would be a nonproductive method. As a final example of conflict, one individual viewed grouping exclusively by age as advantageous, while another principal called for less grouping by age and more grouping by learning styles, skills, and biological clocks. Other suggestions included grouping across grade levels, mainstreaming all students from self-contained classes, and eliminating pullout programs. The only common theme echoed by the principals was that grouping practices must be tailored to meet students' needs, and students must be organized in a manner that enables them to learn from one another. It is interesting to note that despite fundamental disagreements over the nature of grouping strategies, a strong belief was expressed that cooperative learning and peer tutoring would be defining characteristics of restructuring schools.

Principals envisioned fewer discipline problems in their restructured schools. They attributed this belief to more effective grouping of students, more positive student-teacher relationships, and to more individualized instruction, all of which they maintained would result in less boredom and frustration. The principals voiced four common views regarding the procedures used to manage student behavior in restructuring schools. Foremost, they envisioned approaches that "focused on the positive rather than the negative" and were"preventative as opposed to corrective or punitive." Suggested steps to achieve this goal included hiring additional counselors, earlier intervention by a larger number of social workers, and doing away with the disciplinarian position. A second theme was that teachers would take greater

responsibility for managing student behavior. In order to facilitate this development, one principal remarked, "If we are going to give them that responsibility, then we have to allow them to be successful at it, and that is not with thirty kids in a class and five classes a day." The necessity of a discipline management plan for use by teachers as well as a healthy school climate were also cited. As one individual noted, "One of the nice things about an inviting school climate is when morale is low or things are bad, I can always say to that teacher I know your problems, but thank God you never transferred them to the children."

Greater student involvement in managing their own behavior was a third element principals foresaw for behavior management systems in restructured schools. One principal stated, "I see more direct interpersonal accountability between the student and the teacher and between students and their peers." Peer counseling, peer tutoring, cooperative learning, more lessons in tolerance and caring, and a student discipline board were among the principals' recommendations. The final theme was a hope for increased parental involvement in managing children's behavior. They perceived a need for additional parenting skills courses and for "more of a requirement for parents to come to school if the child isn't functioning appropriately."

Student outcomes. When asked to focus on how restructuring would affect students, the majority of principals emphasized affective gains. The principals envisioned higher student self-esteem resulting from enhanced feelings of self worth among teachers, healthier school climates, and students experiencing more frequent success in the classroom. It was also hypothesized that more frequent success would lead to fewer discipline problems. One respondent noted the importance of teachers having individualized and realistic expectations of students:

> "As the research shows, 95% of the kindergarten students come in with a high self-esteem, and by the time they finish the 12th grade, only 5% of them have the same high self-esteem. They've been battered, literally battered in the course of their careers because teachers have set artificial outcomes for the kids, and if the child doesn't match those artificial outcomes, the child is not achieving."

The principals also identified enhanced character development, shared responsibility for one another, more responsible behavior, better interpersonal relationships, and more positive attitudes regarding personal health as affective outcomes that could result from efforts to restructure schooling. Although the majority of the principals credited these gains to the restructuring process itself, one individual poignantly stated, "I'm not sure restructuring schools guarantees any outcomes. I think that it is a result of your commitment to whatever it is you are doing."

Some of the principals also envisioned cognitive gains. They envisioned more individualized instruction leading to increased student learning and hoped that students would become "better problem-solvers and less regurgitators," as well as more independent critical thinkers. Several spoke of restructuring schools helping students to take greater responsibility for their own learning and to become lifelong learners. One principal argued that grades hinder this goal and summarized students' attitudes under current schooling arrangements as, "I'm working for the A and not because I want to learn."

Surprisingly, only one principal mentioned higher standardized test scores as a likely student outcome of school restructuring. On the other hand, all viewed ongoing assessment as vital, though several asserted that the assessment systems would be

different. There was a belief among this group that the assessment systems would measure both cognitive and affective outcomes. In providing a suggestion on how to properly use assessment data, one principal concluded, "We have to start dealing with that [assessment results] in an atmosphere where we're not looking to blame anyone for failure, but we are looking to identify what's going on so that we can make it better."

Discussion

In this section, we discuss selected findings and their implications for the educational reform movement. Earlier we contended that school principals represent an important group of stakeholders whose views must be considered if schools are to change, either incrementally or radically. Their voices provide indications of the direction school restructuring may take as well as hints of dilemmas that will need to be resolved.

Numerous issues were identified by the principals: use of teachers' time, student performance assessment, teacher and parent involvement, contextual (i.e., urban vs. suburban, state vs. local) differences in restructuring, monetary support for local efforts, politics of implementation, impact on the role of students. In this section, we focus on the principals' perspectives on radical change, goals of restructuring, performance accountability, and curriculum and instruction. In our judgment, these issues represent useful vehicles for understanding how the concepts of restructuring intertwine with the realities of schools as experienced by principals.

Principals' Perspectives on Restructuring as Radical Change

During our interviews, we noted several interesting features pertaining to how the principals thought about change in schools. The first was their rather consistent inability or reluctance to let go of past experience as the basis for their projections and

conclusions. That is, we explicitly framed our interview protocol so the principals would project what *might* occur in a restructured school, not describe what does occur in their current schools. In fact, assumptions derived from past and current experience dominated their responses, often explicitly. For example, several principals flatly denied the possibility that state mandates could or would be relaxed or eliminated, thereby limiting the range of possible options available to a school engaged in restructuring. Their responses reflected assumptions of *schooling as we know it*, rather than what might potentially occur in a restructured school.

The first inclination of readers, particularly advocates of restructuring, might be to interpret this type of response as conservative and "typical of administrators." In fact, in earlier research, we observed a similar reluctance to let go of assumptions based on past experience among teachers (Murphy et al., in press). In addition, our initial experiences with restructuring school districts has revealed a similar trend as teachers and administrators attempt to map out a new future (Hallinger & Yanofsky, 1990).

It is difficult to envision schools as substantially different from the contexts in which we ourselves have been educated, for which we have been trained, and in which we have worked. Also, in light of the cyclical history of school reform, educators have adapted a healthy skepticism towards new ways to improve schools (Cuban, 1988, 1990a; Tyack, 1990). Thus, the inability and/or reluctance to reenvision schools is predictable and must be addressed by school leaders as part of the change process (Cuban, 1990b; David, 1990).

A second interesting feature of the principals' responses was a tendency to interpret whatever they were currently doing in their schools as a form of restructuring. As Tyack (1990) writes:

> As U.S. education enters the 1990s, *restructuring* has become a magic incantation... The term is gaining the popularity of *excellence* in the early 1980s, or *equality* in the 1960s. Veteran reformer, John Goodlad thinks that "we are rapidly moving towards the use of 'restructuring' whenever we talk about school reform at all. (p. 170)

Again, in a profession in which the waves of change are as predictable as ocean tides, a reticence to consider alternative visions of schooling may be viewed as functional (Cuban, 1990a). Unconsciously perhaps, administrators are aware that it is easier to alter images than it is to transform cultural norms, organizational policies and classroom practices (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). In certain locales it may be enough to be known as a *restructured school.* This type of surface change alone may legitimate the school as a forward-looking institution of the 1990s. It is notable that much of the discourse around *restructured schools* tends to neglect how to get from here to there, as if the declaration that one has *restructured* is sufficient.

The inclination of these principals, as a group, to favor the concept of restructuring is also worthy of note. This view is inconsistent with that expressed by reform advocates who view school administrators as natural impediments to radical change (Murphy, 1990). They argue that administrators are unwilling to relinquish the reins of control and will, if unchecked, prevent fundamental change from occurring. Chubb (1988) is one of a number of scholars who has articulated this viewpoint.

> Significant gains in student achievement may well require basic changes in the ways schools are governed and organized--in the authority entrusted to them, the objectives imposed upon them, and the professional discretion they are granted. Such changes would,

> however, threaten the security of political representatives and education administrators whose positions are tied to the existing system and who now hold the reins of school reform... their responsibilities would be radically changed and likely reduced under alternative systems of control, whose enactment they have enough political influence to prevent. The reforms that are the most promising are therefore ones least likely to be adopted. (pp. 29-30)

This argument would cast doubt on the sincerity of the principals' support of school restructuring. Were the principals with whom we spoke feigning support or are predictions of administrator disfavor with shared decision-making spurious? Although the nature of the data limits our ability to answer this question definitively, we may speculate on possible explanations.

The subsequent responses of some principals to specific questions about restructuring did not always support their initially favorable assertions about the concept. That is, contradictions and reservations were evident at times in the responses of principals who initially claimed to support restructuring. Despite this tendency, it would be inaccurate to overstate this pattern. Most of the principals really seemed to believe this was a positive direction for schooling.

Better explanations for this somewhat unexpected finding might focus on the definition of restructuring and on the leadership role of school principals. As Elmore (1990a) has written, "the theme of restructuring schools can accommodate a variety of conceptions about what is problematical about American education as well as a variety of solutions" (p. 4). We consciously avoided providing the principals with a clearly delineated definition of school restructuring.

Thus, these principals did not find it difficult to support a vaguely defined concept, particularly one that is in vogue and that offers environmental legitimacy to a beleagured enterprise (Tyack, 1990). Numerous scholars have documented the tendency for school leaders to respond in a similar manner to environmental turbulence throughout the twentieth century (Campbell, Fleming, Newell, & Bennion, 1987; Callahan, 1962; Murphy & Beck, in press). This tendency to coopt a reform-oriented concept is also reinforced by increased expectations for proactive leadership from school principals during the 1980s (Hallinger & Greenblatt, 1989). As Tyack has noted, "It is easy to bash bureaucrats, but in experiments in restructuring school districts superintendents and principals have proven to be key leaders" (p. 186).

If, indeed, school administrators are going to continue to be "key leaders" in the implementation of this round of reforms, what might we learn from these interviews? How do the views expressed by these principals inform our understanding of how schools are likely to restructure? We turn next to a discussion of how these principals viewed the impact of restructuring efforts.

Impact of Restructuring

The movement to restructure schools has been driven by the need to produce students who are better learners in school and in their subsequent lives (Elmore, 1990a; Murphy, in press). It has been asserted that this represents the basis of the nation's future economic competitiveness (Carnegie, 1986). Thus, we are interested in the anticipated impact of restructuring from the perspective of school principals. Examining the projected effects of restructured schools is also a means of highlighting the direction school restructuring might take.

As noted earlier, few principals explicitly mentioned improvements in student

cognition as an anticipated outcome of restructuring. Rather, they identified improved teacher attitudes and commitment, increased parent participation, and a more positive affective orientation among students as potential consequences. While increased teacher commitment and parent participation are indeed recognized goals of the restructuring movement, the absence of cognitive outcomes in discourse with the principals is notable.

Interestingly, the principals' emphasis on affective outcomes is congruent with the views of teachers as they consider the impact of restructured schools (Murphy et al., in press). The focus of these two groups of professionals, however, is quite different from the outcomes underscored by politicians and businesspersons at the vanguard of the educational reform movement of the 1980s and 1990s.

We find this consistent with the general pattern of discourse and activity in the restructuring movement. While concerns for student learning remain the dominant impetus for restructuring at the national level, concerns for *modes of participation and governance* by parents and teachers often tend to displace the goals of improved teaching and learning during implementation. Similarly, at the school level, concerns for the affective development of students often assumes precedence over cognition when educators discuss programmatic goals. Thus, the responses of these principals represent quite accurately the implementation orientation we have observed as local school districts engage in the process of restructuring their schools. The focus on teaching and learning is easily lost during the complex process of overhauling the very infrastructure of schooling as we know it. Elmore has noted this problem:

> [T]here is no guarantee that the restructuring... will change the conditions of teaching and learning for teachers and students.

> There are a variety of ways for educators and politicians to appear to be to responding to pressing political and social problems without doing much about the content, pedagogy, technology, working conditions, or governance of schooling. (1990b, p. 295)

This observation suggests the need for teaching and learning to assume greater centrality in discussions of restructuring both nationally and locally. Linkages between governance structures and conceptions of teaching and learning must become more explicit and must be translated into terms that can be implemented at the local level (Cuban, 1990b; Hallinger & Richardson, 1988; Murphy et al., in press; Rowan, 1990).

Curriculum and Instruction

The above remarks concerning the potential impact of restructuring foreshadow our conclusions concerning curriculum and instruction. There was a discernable lack of *specificity* and *agreement* in the principals' responses regarding the ways in which schools might adapt curriculum and instruction to further student learning. Both features seem noteworthy to us.

To the extent that the principals believed restructuring would have a positive impact on teaching and learning, that belief was based on a kind of "black box" transformation. That is, increased teacher and parental ownership was posited as having positive spillover effects into the curricular and instructional programs. Surpisingly few specific examples were provided as to how that transformation might occur.

Furthermore, there was surprisingly little agreement regarding the nature of curriculum and instruction that would have beneficial effects on student learning. Thus, there was considerable variation in the principals' beliefs about the efficacy of tracking, grouping of students within classrooms, teachers' role in curriculum

development, the most effective methods of instruction and staff development. This should be of concern to policymakers as they deliberate on the means of implementing radically different governance structures (Cuban, 1990b; Murphy, in press).

We would suggest that the perspectives offered by the principals on curriculum and instruction reflect the current state of instructional leadership in schools. During the 20th century, school administrators have not generally embraced the instructional leadership role (Callahan, 1962; Cuban, 1988). This pattern began to change during the 1980s as principals were pressed to assume greater responsibility for instructional leadership in their schools. Despite this shift in role emphasis, we contend that the instructional leadership training offered to most principals during the 1980s has not prepared principals for leadership in restructured schools. Much of the instructional leadership training was derived from the effective schools research and focuses on recipes and models that are of limited assistance in thinking through issues of curriculum and instruction under the assumptions that guide restructuring efforts. This suggests the need for new conceptions of instructional leadership and new forms of principal training (Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, in press).

Performance Accountability

A key concern expressed by the principals involved accountability for school performance. In organizations historically characterized by individual principal's accountability for decision-making and performance, it remains unclear how a school-based council responsible for significant school decisions will share accountability with the school's formal leader. Unfortunately, while accountability issues remain a frequent target of critics (Geisert, 1988), they are only beginning to receive attention from those advocating and studying school-based management and shared decision-making

(Cohen, 1990; David, 1990; Sykes, 1990; Tyack, 1990).

The principals in our sample focused their comments in this area primarily on the impact shared governance would have on hierarchical relationships within the system: relationships between superintendents and principals, principals and teachers, teachers and teachers. Other research has identified non-hierarchical accountability as an issue of similarly high concern. For example, Seeley and his colleagues interviewed a sample of New York city principals seeking their perceptions of school restructuring (Seeley et al., 1990). These principals questioned how shared governance would respond to the needs of parents and community members.

> Some of the principals' comments also made clear that many other aspects ... of the system will have to change for collaborative school-based decision-making to work effectively--including parent, teacher, and union attitudes: Parents and the public like to look to a single official for accountability, thus creating a continuing pressure for top-down decision-making. 'The parent doesn't want to come in and talk to a committee', said Principal Y. 'She's interested in meeting with the person in charge.' (Seeley et al., 1990, p. 14)

Thus, both hierarchical and non-hierarchical accountability under shared decision-making pose problems with which principals are unfamiliar and uncomfortable. A portion of their discomfort stems from their lack of confidence in other elements of the school system to adapt district policies and norms to support school-based accountability. Initial evidence suggests that this skepticism is not without justification (Chapman & Boyd, 1986; Hallinger & Yanofsky, 1990, Seeley et al., 1990), although there are also favorable reports from school districts that are experimenting with new accountability

structures (David, 1990).

The nature of a district's restructuring effort is important to understanding the type of changes needed in its accountability system. As noted above, restructuring typically means different things in different school districts. The goals of restructuring, the district and state policy framework, the level of authority and types of decisions decentralized to the school, the formalization and extent of power-sharing among staff, parents and the principal, and the conception(s) of teaching that drive the district's effort are just some of the factors that influence how a district addresses accountability (David, 1990; Hallinger & Richardson, 1988; Hallinger & Yanofksy, 1990; Rowan, 1990).

It should be emphasized that the principals whom we interviewed did not identify accountability as an insoluble issue. Their comments do, however, suggest that accountability for performance represents a fundamental concern awaiting resolution in the minds of school principals. It seems reasonable for those persons who are held accountable for school performance to ask how their roles will be affected without being accused of obstructionism. School systems have not traditionally provided the type of support for experimentation that would lead people to readily assume radically different roles or engage in new forms of governance (Cuban, 1990a, b; Tyack, 1990). This issue must be addressed explicitly in district policy and practice if restructuring is to go beyond the stage of discourse in local districts (David, 1990).

Conclusion

This study explored the views held by school principals towards reform efforts characterized as school restructuring. While the principals as a group were more supportive of this concept than some might have expected, their beliefs also illuminate the myriad difficulties associated with fundamental reform (Cuban, 1990a; Elmore,

1990a, b; Tyack, 1990). Aside from the predictable impediments to reform represented by entrenched bureaucracies, resistant organizational cultures, and competing political interests, this study highlighted the potentially crucial role played by the belief systems of those professionals charged with implementing educational reform. It suggests that even professionals who view themselves as supporters of fundamental reform may be severely limited by their own experience, training and beliefs in bringing about a new order of schools.

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